

VERDICTS & SETTLEMENTS

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Creative and Caring

Attorneys say mediator Stacie Hausner resolves cases with emotional intelligence and persistence.

By Shane Nelson

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ADR Services, Inc. neutral Stacie F. Hausner believes many of us have been mediating for most of our lives.

“Even little babies - toddlers do it,” Hausner said. “Some toddler takes another’s toy car out of their hand, and the kid cries, and then you’ll see another kid walk up and hand them a different toy. ... That’s conflict resolution, right?”

One of three children - and the daughter of a personal injury and employment attorney - Hausner said she started mediating early.

“As a middle child, I always saw myself as being adept at resolution,” she said with a chuckle. “And as an athlete on teams as a kid, I always enjoyed helping people get through conflict. ... But I don’t know that I was really cognizant of it until I was an adult looking back.”

A 1996 Boston University School of Law graduate, Hausner started her legal career as a business litigator at Mitchell Silberberg & Knupp LLP and went on to handle entertainment, personal injury and employment cases, representing both plaintiffs and defense clients.

Hausner later shifted her focus, however, completing her LLM in Dispute Resolution at Pepperdine University’s Straus Institute in 2016 before joining the ADR Services, Inc. roster of private neutrals that same year.

“The great thing about being a mediator is you’re learning every day,” Hausner said. “Intellectually, that is so interesting for me. To have different subject matter, different personalities, different lawyers every day. I just love that so much.”



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Hausner has mediated roughly 1,500 cases over the past eight years, tackling everything from personal injury to intellectual property disputes as well as employment, real estate, professional malpractice, civil rights and construction defect matters. She said her approach has evolved over the years.

“I certainly don’t want to come in and make everyone miserable and feel attacked in a mediation,” Hausner explained. “It’s how can we get people to resolution without feeling attacked, ... where they can understand their risk for trial without feeling defensive. I think that’s a nuance I’ve developed.”

Los Angeles plaintiffs’ attorney Kenneth G. Ruttenberg has used

Hausner roughly 15 times to resolve personal injury, real estate and construction defect cases, and he said the neutral is excellent with clients.

“She’s extremely likable - probably more likable than any other mediator I’ve ever worked with,” Ruttenberg said. “She’s excellent at building rapport with both sides to create a very trusting environment and atmosphere, and she’s just an excellent listener.”

Hausner noted that she likes to receive briefs from all of the parties prior to her mediations, and she also tries to speak over the phone with counsel beforehand. Hausner added that she typically begins her mediations by keeping parties sep-

Stacie F. Hausner

ADR Services, Inc.
Los Angeles

Areas of Specialty:

Employment
Personal Injury
Business
Real Estate
Professional Malpractice

arate, but she will on occasion suggest joint sessions if she feels that approach may help move beyond an impasse.

Hausner stressed, meanwhile, that hearing from the parties is crucial.

"We're asking them to make a really big decision that day, and sometimes the litigation's been on-going for years," she said. "If we're going to ask them to step aside from that and choose the path of compromise through a settlement, we need to make sure they feel heard, that they get that opportunity to tell their story and to know as we work towards a compromise, their interests are being met, their goals are being met, their story is being told."

Santa Monica plaintiffs' attorney Gina Browne has used Hausner recently to resolve two different employment disputes, and she described the ADR Services, Inc. mediator as strategic and creative.

"She has read your briefs backwards and forwards, and she definitely knows the law on the issue,"

Browne said. "And while some mediators come in and ignore the client, she really cares about their story. She wants to hear from them, and I think she just does a really good job of making the client feel more comfortable."

Hausner also stressed that each mediation is unique, a component of her work she finds especially fulfilling.

"Every case is so different, which makes my job so wonderful," she said. "Every day is different with different people, with different dynamics. It's like a puzzle helping them figure it out and trying to find a path to settlement. ... And we need to set up a process that allows everybody to participate in a way that gets us to settlement."

Los Angeles defense attorney Nancy E. Yaffe has used Hausner to mediate three emotionally charged employment disputes, and she really appreciated the ADR Services, Inc. neutral's demeanor.

"She read the interpersonal dynamics really well and understood

the complexities of the situation," Yaffe said. "She just did a really good job with both sides - not only on the legal issues but the interpersonal issues and what's really important."

Yaffe said she also liked how Hausner handled discussions about the case's merits.

"It's really important for me as defense counsel that a mediator understands I need to advocate for my client, and [the mediator should] be able to point out risks in a case without undermining my authority or my position," Yaffe explained. "Some mediators just mess that up. They challenge you in front of your clients. ... Stacie has a very nice way about her, where she'd say something like, 'Well, I understand what you're saying, but have you thought about this?' She's got a high EQ - or emotional intelligence - for handling cases."

Hausner said it's common for her to employ a variety of different strategies to move beyond impasses, including making use of brackets and mediator's proposals.

"And sometimes the appropriate tool is evaluation, telling the parties where they have exposure and where their risk is at trial and what a damages case would look like," she said.

Ruttenberg said Hausner isn't afraid to offer those opinions, but she does so solely with settlement in mind.

"She's probably more persistent in settling a case than any mediator I've ever worked with," Ruttenberg said. "And she comes up with very creative ways of settling cases. She really has a knack for it. ... She's just fixated on settling cases, and there have been times when I don't think things are going well, but all of a sudden, she's like a magician, and she pulls out a settlement."

Here are some attorneys who have used Hausner's services: Kenneth G. Ruttenberg, The Ruttenberg Law Firm PC; Nancy E. Yaffe, Fox Rothschild LLP; Gina Browne, Feldman Brown APC; Anthony E. Sonnett, Lewis & Brisbois Bisgaard & Smith LLP; Andrew S. Hollins, Messner Reeves LLP